

1986

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Recommended Citation

Kirkby, Joan, Daisy Miller Down Under: The Old World/New World Paradigm in Barbara Hanrahan, *Kunapipi*, 8(3), 1986.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol8/iss3/4>

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Abstract

Barbara Hanrahan might well be considered to be to the Australian psyche what Nathaniel Hawthorne is to the American. Both are at times Gothic writers, given to explorations of the power of the imagination, the position of women and the effect of the Old World on the New World psyche. The historical impulse in Hanrahan's fiction has been made explicit in the epigraph to the most recently published novel *Annie Magdalene*:

Daisy Miller Down Under: The Old World/New World Paradigm in Barbara Hanrahan

I also knew *The Color Purple* would be a historical novel, and thinking of this made me chuckle... The chuckle was because womanlike my 'history' starts not with the taking of lands, or the births, battles and deaths of Great Men, but with one woman asking another for her underwear.

Alice Walker

I want my women to be strong legendary beings... I have to create my own world — a world that's a combination of the inner and the outer, the physical and the symbolic. A world that isn't merely 'today' but which is the past as well. To me the past is never dead.

Barbara Hanrahan

Barbara Hanrahan might well be considered to be to the Australian psyche what Nathaniel Hawthorne is to the American. Both are at times Gothic writers, given to explorations of the power of the imagination, the position of women and the effect of the Old World on the New World psyche. The historical impulse in Hanrahan's fiction has been made explicit in the epigraph to the most recently published novel *Annie Magdalene*:

For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it at all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it. And the novels, without meaning to, inevitably lie... All these infinitely obscure lives remain to be recorded.¹

Hanrahan has ever been concerned with the lives of women caught in the power struggles of history but lost from the official record.

While the realist works like *Kewpie Doll* (1984) and *Annie Magdalene* (1985) have been perhaps more obviously concerned to document the unsung lives of so-called ordinary women, the earlier Gothic novels —

The Albatross Muff (1978), *Where the Queens All Strayed* (1978), *The Peach Gardens* (1979), *The Frangipani Gardens* (1980) and *Dove* (1981) — are also informed by the historical impulse.² Interwoven with motifs of the official history of Australia they distil the essence of a particular epoch to form what might be called a psychic history of Australia. Far from being a de-contextualised literature of the fantastic,³ Hanrahan's work derives its vitality from its exploration of inherited patterns of thought which cripple the present.

Just as Hawthorne repeatedly explores New England's past (informed by the conviction that the moral of New England is 'the deformity of any government that does not grow out of the nature of things and the character of its people'),⁴ so Hanrahan continues to probe the Australian past, in particular the past of Adelaide, named after an English queen. She has replied somewhat testily to critics who suggest she should find somewhere else to write about, 'Nobody told William Faulkner to stop writing about the same set of characters in the deep South.'⁵ It requires no stretch of the imagination to see parallels between Hawthorne's Salem and Hanrahan's Adelaide, which for all its civilized elegance has been the scene of bizarre and sinister events. Linking a sense of the sinister to the uneasy juxtaposition of Old World/New World elements Hanrahan herself says of Adelaide:

It's such a toy-like place. So pretty on the surface. One weirdness is the way you have Government House on the corner of the main street. You have big palm trees waving up and the Union Jack waving. That's the setting for something sinister in my mind.... It's the oddness of having a cathedral — the Englishness mixed up with the Australianness. And then you get a jungliness with the palm trees and everywhere you walk you see the purple hills enclosing you even more. And in the early summer morning there's a golden feeling all about you ... and it seems that nothing evil could exist in this place. But it does.... When all the animals got killed at the zoo what a strange and typically Adelaide thing that it was all the baby ones.⁶

The fiction of both writers is permeated with real historical figures, Governor Winthrop and Anne Hutcheson in *The Scarlet Letter*, the Duke and Duchess of York in *The Frangipani Gardens*, Dickens in *The Albatross Muff*. Like the narrator of *Kewpie Doll*, Hanrahan's characters are relentlessly drawn back 'to the legendary land across the sea that offered the only chance of returning'.⁷ The Old World/New World motif is central.

The Gothic has always possessed an essential socio-political dimension. As David Punter writes in *The Literature of Terror*, Gothic fiction is engaged 'in a process of cultural self-analysis, and the images which it throws up are the dream-figures of a troubles social group'.⁸ Gothic

writers, he points out, 'bring us up against the boundaries of the civilised', demonstrate 'the relative nature of ethical and behavioural codes and place over against the conventional world a different sphere in which these codes ... operate only in distorted forms' (p. 404). The Gothic foreground areas of socio-psychological life which are suppressed in the interest of social and psychological equilibrium, in particular the relations between the sexes. Punter also notes the obsession of American Gothic writers with the European past:

In Brown, Hawthorne and Poe, evil has in one sense or another to do with the European: Brown's villains generally come out of the Old World; the guilt which haunts Hawthorne's characters is associated with infection by European intolerance; Poe creates an artificial version of a European environment in which to set his tales. Europe stands in all three cases as a weighty imperiment in the path of progress. (p. 211)

Similarly Leslie Fiedler notes that if man was troubled by the ruins of a decaying past and dreamed of supernatural enemies lurking in their shadows,

it was because he suspected that the past, even dead, especially dead, could continue to work harm. Even as late as Henry James, an American writer deeply influenced by Gothic modes was able to imagine the malaria, the miasma which arises from decaying ruins, striking down Daisy Miller as she romantically stands at midnight in the Coliseum.⁴

The Gothic mode has proved useful to writers exploring the Old World/New World paradigm; it is, in Rosemary Jackson's words, a mode which narrates 'epistemological confusion': 'The subject is no longer confident about appropriating or perceiving a material world',¹⁰ — a confusion exacerbated in fiction in which the subject is confronted with a world that is foreign and other. Undermining concepts of what is real (p. 175) the Gothic aims at 'dissolution of an order experienced as oppressive and insufficient' (pp. 176, 122). Moreover, the Gothic has a subversive function in attempting to depict a reversal of the subject's cultural formation (p. 177) — 'attempting to dissolve the symbolic order at its very base, where it is established in and through the subject where the dominant signifying system is reproduced' (p. 178). Jackson writes of Dracula, and vampire myth in general, that it is 'a re-enactment of that killing of the primal father who has kept all the women to himself' and 'in relation to the theories of Lacan ... it could be claimed that the act of vampirism is the most violent and extreme attempt to negate, or reverse, the subject's insertion into the symbolic' (p. 120). The Gothic is particu-

larly appropriate, then, in the exploration of Old World patriarchal cultures imposed on New Worlds.¹¹

In its exploration of cultural myths *The Albatross Muff* is a classic of Australian fiction, comparable to *The Scarlet Letter* in American fiction. Both novels explore the violation of a new world by forced liaison with an old, corrupt and unnatural order. The albatross muff becomes an emblem like the scarlet letter of the arbitrary nature of man made law in its attempts to govern natural law. Hanrahan's Stella, like Hawthorne's Pearl, is the girl child co-extensive with a continent; both are associated with the vital energies of the new world from which they come — Pearl is at home in the wild heathen nature of the forest and Stella in the land of tall grey trees and silence. Even as Pearl becomes a living hieroglyphic of the scarlet letter, so young Stella becomes associated with the albatross muff, the unnatural artifact created by the slaying of that great white bird of the southern waters; a sexual resonance exists in both. Stella like Pearl is a father-haunted child. When her father dies in a riding accident in Australia, Stella and her family return to the father-dominated society of Victorian England. Here all the possibilities of the continent with which she is associated are appropriated by an Old World father; like Pearl she is reclaimed for the patriarchal world by the agency of a father's kiss — rather more than a kiss in this instance:

He had strong arms and he put them round her. He smelled of cigars and cherry laurel water. Papa, in the old land, had smelled the same. Maybe it was him; maybe she was down the tunnel, across the sea — there, where she wanted to be at last... Stella felt the same age as Baby had been made forever by death. She felt irresponsible, redeemed. She was his child; he was her papa.

His liking took her body away from her; made it more his than hers... He did things to her.¹²

Stella, like Pearl, is absorbed into 'the world's artificial system' and henceforth subject to 'the interpolations of the perverted mind and heart of man'.¹³ The violation of Stella becomes an emblem of the violation of the New World. Even as Pearl is young America, so Stella is young Australia; the dishonouring of the child is an emblem of the dishonouring of the promise of the continent.¹⁴

However, in *The Albatross Muff*, Hanrahan's exploration of the Old World/New World paradigm takes place in the Old World; and in this encounter between an Old World male and a New World female there are analogues with James's *Daisy Miller*. When Daisy Miller visits the old world she is ostracised by the American cabal in Rome, who have assumed old world behavioural codes more rigidly than the indigines, a

mark of their own disorientation and desperate need to adapt. Excluded, bewildered and defiant Daisy flaunts these codes and dies from a contamination contracted in the Coliseum; in a sense she is a sacrifice to the older civilisation, the conflict between Old and New Worlds.

Hanrahan's Stella provides a striking parallel. Stella is a colonial child, the first of Hanrahan's 'antipodean angel-children', who dies of contact with the old world, in particular a victim of its sexual politics. Stella returns to that mythical land beyond the sea still regarded as 'home' by her family. She arrives in England 'dressed like a rosella parrot' where she is inevitably perceived as other: 'Everywhere she is, people die... They reckon she puts on spells. Sort of the Evil Eye. She comes all the way from Australia, they say. Foreign parts where it is too hot for a proper human. I wouldn't be surprised if a bit of convict hadn't got in. There's something funny about her' (p. 171). Marginalised in England and cut off from her roots in Australia Stella is vulnerable to contamination: first Mr Backhouse, then Sir William Hall. Like the albatross Stella is easy prey when out of her element; the albatross, while powerful and at ease in its own element, appears clumsy and stupid on land, hence the name molly mawk or stupid gull. Ultimately, like Daisy Miller she dies of contact with the old world, a contact much more graphically sexual in Hanrahan than in James. 'He hated her and determined to nail her harder than ever tonight. She deserved it, she revolted him ... the shadows under the arms of her dress looked like evidence of some nigger variety of sweat' (p. 178). Foreign and other, like the continent with which she is associated, Stella is perceived as fallen and ripe for colonisation, even as Australia because of the terms of settlement coupled with her age and seasonal differences has seemed curiously uninnocent to European eyes, a preternaturally old young land.

It is important to remember that the novel is set in the 1850s when Australia was in the process of a radical democratisation that offered implicitly a challenge to the rigid class structure, poverty and polarised sexual relations in Victorian England. Stella and her family live on a sheep station near Goulborn N.S.W. where 'the sky was a brilliant blue... It was summer and everything seemed as it should be' (p. 76) — N.S.W. was 'the mother colony' and Goulbourn the last town in the British Empire to become a city by virtue of the royal letters patent creating a bishopric. However, after the death of her father, Stella, her mother, baby sister and nurse Moak ('Moak had been a convict, but good behaviour had turned her into an emancipist') return to England — the land of Queen Victoria, Princess Vicki, Mr Dickens (who visits Percy Villas), the Chartist Riots, the Great Exhibition, the Crystal Fountain,

the Turkish and Crimean Wars. But above all England is Cut Throat Lane, the Other Nation and an empire drinking the blood of its women. 'Although these people were out in the street, they weren't free. Fresh air didn't enhance their complexions. Their eyes were rheumy, their skin had a tinge of blue, the holes in their clothes weren't slashed for decoration. They were ugly and foreign looking... They were English people...' (p. 111). It is a novel in which the persons introduced bear the features not of individuals but of the class or race to which they belong: Stella, the colonial child; Moak, the Irish convict; Sir William Hall, English patriarch, radical in all but sexual relations. Just as the relation between Hester and Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* is an emblem of the unnaturalness of the liaison between the new land and old order ('Mine, was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay'),¹⁵ so is the relationship between Stella, from the land of tall grey trees and silence, and Sir William Hall, Kinderschander ('child-profaner') of Victorian England. In England Stella is appropriated by Sir William Hall of Percy Villas — the maleness of his domain could hardly be more pointedly signified.

Western society as portrayed in Hanrahan's Gothic fiction is a society that has internalised what Jungian social theorist Linda Leonard refers to as the sick side of the masculine: 'In the psyche of the puella dwells a sick manifestation of the rigid authoritarian side of the masculine, the image of a perverted and sadistic old man who threatens the young girl.' He is the image of the sick society; on the cultural level signifying that the female qualities are threatened by the male. 'The puella must deal with the perverted old man within who hacks away at her potential before she is able to create and actualize her achievements in the world.'¹⁶ The motif of the young girl menaced by the sinister old man who is inevitably from the Old World recurs in Hanrahan's fiction.

In *The Frangipani Gardens* Charlie Roche — 'a thorough English man, but delicate, he might be a Tennyson' — visits Australia where he becomes obsessed with an Australian girl child:

She was perfect, with her ringlets and snowy pinafore.... She was the purest thing in the world, and she strayed into his dreaming ... a baby doll: bisque head with go-to-sleep eyes and April smile with two little teeth; finely formed imitation kid body stuffed very plump ... 'Easily undressed' ... 'Patent indestructible dolly, cannot be broken by the rough usage to which a doll is usually subjected.'¹⁷

In the same novel Girlie O'Brien is maimed by her own father: 'The reward of Papa's tyrant arms about her had set her off playing little girl for life' (p. 17). Young Lou is troubled by dreams of molestation:

'Little girl,' he said, his voice wobbly with love, his eyes, savaging her body. 'Pretty pussy,' he said, wheedling, and he was the dirty old man who offered the young girl two shillings to go up the lane, and increased it to four when she refused. But he was an academic with a look of scholarly benevolence, he read and read. (p. 43)

In *The Peach Groves* Mr Maufe, who was related to Lord Fermoy and knew the nephew of the Earl of Annersley intimately, is literally a child molester: 'Papa was acquainted with Sir George Gray, so when a certain tot turned nasty in Hyde Park and made it imperative he should speed abroad New Zealand seemed the obvious choice.'¹⁸ However, even in exile he knows a certain little door: 'Amy's lips were sealing-wax red and just as sticky; Eileen might have come straight from the convent with her forelock tied up with baby ribbon, and all those scapulas safety-pinned to her chemise' (p. 49). The antipodean angel child Maud becomes his prey and not until Mr Maufe is thwarted in his possession of Maud (and Maud's mother has relinquished her incestuous relationship with her brother) are Maud and her family freed of the last vestiges of the Old World.¹⁹

In *The Albatross Muff* the violation of Australia by the Old World is rendered in the relationship between Stella and Sir William Hall. Throughout the novel Stella is associated with Australia, England is 'Home for Mama, but not Stella. Her home was still the one by the river, though she knew she had left it forever.' While 'England pretended to be home', home was 'that land of tall grey trees and silence' (p. 58).

Stella wished they had never come to England. It had been better when they were in New South Wales, and Mama was cursing the heat, and the way her best muslin was stained at the armpits. (p. 70)

She wanted to return to where she'd come from; get across the sea, go down a deep hole — come out in that dreamland she'd left; be only a little girl again. (p. 131)

She is terrified of England and its legacy to her:

She felt as if she might have died already.... She felt as if her skin should be shrivelled and wrinkled and a thousand years old.... For 1861 wasn't safe.... Maybe when today — 1861 — was written down, it would seem as safe and done-with as then: all the sharp colours bleached to a soft dull sepia, all the people — street people like Moak and proper people like Mr Hall — reduced to mere cyphers by words like Society and Class. (p. 132)

Indeed much of Stella's guilt and hallucination in the novel stem not from madness but from the exposure of the colonial child to the hideous poverty and social injustice of Victorian England where the family drama

of Percy Villas may be played out in elegant if tragic comfort while Moak and Tom are freezing, debased wretches only streets away. It is through Stella and Moak that young Edith Hall discovers 'a nightmare other England':

Her London, so far, had been ... an oasis of green parks where events of national import were festively celebrated with fireworks ... the phantoms were left for Stella to account for. Edith knew it to have been a mistake the day she'd seen the crossing sweeper who was only a scarecrow bundle of rags ... and that horrid man crawling on his knees, selling nutmeg-graters — oh yes, he was a mistake, too: someone crawled out of Mr Dickens's Tom-all-Alone's (and everyone knew that was only fiction) ... And then she rounded the corner, and then it was another world.... While the well-groomed family history of Percy Villas was being played out, there'd also been climbing-boys covered in soot, and Mary Ann the match-box maker who'd never heard of England, and thought a violet a pretty bird. (pp. 196-7)

In England, cut off from her origins, Stella finds herself 'being made like part of a legend; hate the legend sweeping me on into a life I don't want to live' (p. 115); in short she is assimilated into the symbolic order, the gender roles determined by Victorian society. She becomes a character in a culturally inscribed legend (there is more than a hint of Lacan in Stella's inscription into patriarchal myth): 'She was an orphan-heiress.... Even the hyphen, though it might convert the two situations into a tidy single, couldn't make the role — orphan-heiress — easier to play' (p. 107). It is a deadly legend. Hanrahan's London is an aggressively masculine world which is lethal to women. Male tyranny in the family is not essentially separable from male tyranny in the society at large, in Virginia Woolf's words, 'the public and private worlds are inseparably connected ... the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other'.¹⁷ Stella's mother is set upon by street roughs in Cut Throat Lane and 'knocked so hard on the head that she subsequently died' (p. 104); Edith's mother has 'turned into something like an Egyptian mummy' (p. 163) — 'touching her would be like touching the clammy underside of a piece of Windsor soap' (p. 119). This legend prescribes a similar fate for Stella and when she succeeds Pensa as the second Mrs William Hall, she realizes their fatal affinity: 'In the night Pensa pressed her wet, invisible mouth on Stella's, till she woke up, choking. She curled invisibly twin-like about Stella's body, icing the air with her breath' (p. 183).

In the vision of the novel the patriarchal legacy of Victorian England is the particular cultural straitjacket encumbering Australia. The well groomed family history being played out at Percy Villas proves to be the suppurating sore infecting the nation and its empire. The violation of

Stella by Mr Hall represents the corruption of new world innocence by old world license. Sir William Hall is presented as the quintessential English gentleman, as Victorian Patriarch.

For Papa was liberal. He cared; he hoped for a better day to come. He read Mrs Stowe's *Uncle Tom* and cried.... It couldn't be denied that Dissy's papa had a side that was decidedly radical. But his radicalism had well-defined limits. Where the fair sex was concerned it quicksilver turned romantic. And that meant that to be Papa's daughter and a proper girl, you should live out each day demurely, blinkered by down-cast eyelashes and the shadow of purity's invisible crush of lilies.... You limited your step under your crinoline à la Eugenie; you let Mama devour your time, boa-constrictor like, with weak health and notes to be written and visiting cards to be left. (p. 86)

Though one side of Sir William Hall is 'the proper English gentleman who jingled money in his pocket, and made you know heaven and gentle Jesus was true', the other is the perverted old man who menaces the puella. He had first seen his wife Pensa when she was an infant:

What had started as a love match, so perfectly romantic — she, a tiny-tot crowing at him from a hearth rug ... then a moppet who nightly lisped his name into her prayers, then a pretty maiden with a blush ... had degenerated into a sick room union that couldn't produce an heir. And, like Edith, Pensa didn't have the grace to die. She lingered on, a limp rag dolly on her couch. (pp. 86-87)

In relation to the national theme, Moak, the convict turned emancipist, is closely allied with Stella and with Australia. She is a repository of folk wisdom: 'Moak knew things that other people didn't.... Moak knew magic' (p. 8). 'Moak was better than Mama. She was big and had a man's smell. Her skin was brown as a gipsy's. Moak was a dark lady; though she wasn't a lady, according to Mama's standards, and wasn't as dark as the blackfellows back home' (p. 13). And Moak smells of Australia: 'Stella sniffed up her smell. Doing that, she was safe among the old bush things: the gum-tree that had pinkish bark in the spring, the Wedding bush by the verandah ... finger flower, love flower ... Pricky Moses wattle.... There was Moak to make things safe' (p. 24). On the voyage to England it is Moak who warns of the danger of killing the albatross. However, once in England, Moak is no longer the berry brown Gypsy Queen; she is an outcast, a beggar, a fallen woman: 'Then something terrible happened. Moak was one minute Nurse, dishing out stewed rhubarb for nursery tea, the next she was a fallen woman' (p.66). Moak reassures her 'No one can really part us ... I was in the bush with you' (p. 67). The next time Stella sees Moak, 'she was ragged, her clothes were all to ribbons. She was ugly, like a beggar. The street was

where she belonged, with the crossing sweeper and the ragamuffins who turned somersaults for a penny' (p. 78).

Stella is haunted by this transformation. At those times when Stella, exhausted by the split between the Old World and the New, only longs for oblivion and is about to be assimilated into the female-annihilating world of Victorian England, Moak appears as a menacing figure, reminding her of her origins. Much as Stella attempts to forget Moak ('And being Mrs William Hall would take her even further away from Moak; from the old things...'), she cannot: 'The voices were back again ... Moak resumed accusing. She had come to Percy Villas in person. Moak had tracked her down' (pp.181-2).

Moak in England expresses the resentment of 'the other nation', whilst in Australia she was an emancipist and a member of the class and race said to have fostered the growth of Australian democracy and nationalism. The figure of Moak, convict emancipist and gipsy matriarch, becomes the arch antagonist of Sir William Hall, English patriarch and kinderschander. Though Stella reasons that 'Snakestone and mandrake root had no power over Mr Hall; a hare's foot carried in the pocket was rendered ridiculous by his well-heeled gentleman's logic' (p. 81), it is Moak who triumphs over Sir William Hall and reclaims the antipodean child. In a burst of energy associated throughout the novel with Australia, Moak rises from her wretchedness in Cut Throat Lane, assumes her former magic, smashes Sir William's skull, and sets fire to Percy Villas:

For Moak was still so much possessed by magic, that anything might be true.... Moak was someone out of legend, spirited to Percy Villas from some storm-wracked headland, some bushland eerie. Queer and brown and foreign, hate — or was it love? had made her strong. In her arms she held Stella.... 'You killed her,' she cried.... Moak's forehead reared higher; her hair whirled round her face in goffered frills. Moak's voice ... spoke of seals being broken and vials pouring forth; of the star, Wormwood, which fell from Heaven; of the Beast whose number is six hundred three score and six. Papa kept coming forward. Now Stella was all that kept them apart. They fought for her. Their hands grappled. She hung between them like a broken white bird. Edith remembered the albatross killed on the voyage round the Horn. Mrs Edenbrough's muff had been pretty. But not this. Not Stella's dead head flaying, and her body taking their blows. (pp. 203-4)

It is an apocalyptic conflagration which destroys Percy Villas, the primary symbol in the novel of male authority. Moak's burning of the house is a symbolic gesture, an attempt to eliminate the sexual/social oppression that radiates out from the private home into the public domain. It is an expression of class hatred and an attempt to rescue the antipodean

child from her bitter heritage. Here the symbolism linking Stella to the albatross/Australia symbolism is made explicit.

In the end Stella had gone back to her beginnings. Tossing in a bed in cold England, she had vaulted the miles of sea that separated her from the land she'd seemingly lost — a land where it was summer rather than winter... That world was real, not this ... now, mingled with sea smells, the scent of wattle and eucalyptus was strong. Nothing mattered but this little last bit of journey... Laurel and wedding bush. Throught he willows, the river rushing... Once Moak had been a gipsy queen. She was like that again. (pp. 199-201)

The Old World/New World paradigm, and the unwitting quest for origins, occur in the other Gothic novels as well. *Where the Queens All Strayed* chronicles the decline of 'one of the grandest houses in the hills': 'the house that, as Violet Bank, had offered hospitality to Royalty now sheltered a variety of misfortune'.²¹ *The Frangipani Gardens* chronicles the demise of the O'Brien clan, descendants of an ancient race of kings, against the backdrop of the Royal Visit of 1927 when the Duke and Duchess of York visited Australia to open the first Parliament. *The Peach Groves* follows the uneasy transformation of Betsy Jones of Liverpool, England, into Blanche Dean of Glenelg, South Australia, and her brother Harry Jones into Major Jones who lived at Epsom where the volcanic soil was choice, who raced Wapiti and Nelson, and moved among the élite of Auckland. Their sporadic incestuous relation is a measure of their inability to break from the Old World and assimilate to the New. Only when Harry discovers his antipodean God in the aloneness of the Gum-fields and brother and sister renounce their liaison is the past 'finally wiped out' (p. 91). Tempe, half Maori, half European ('Tane and mother were muddled in Tempe's head with Alfred Lord T. and the Lady of Shallot.... Tempe was two people really' (pp. 199-200)) is destroyed by the split. In *Dove Arden Valley* ('like the domains and gardens of some splendid estate in the best part of Europe ... set down in tact among the gum trees') is contrasted to the great wheat fields of the Mallee.²² However, even the people of the Mallee who 'with axe and slasher, scrub roller and stump jump plough' have 'created a landscape' (p. 77) remain 'proudly, so pitifully English ... hedged by an antipodean jungle of stiff splintered branches, the mysterious pearly-grey bloom. The wheat fields only spread so far; the untamed Mallee country seemed endless' (p. 81). The Old World/New World paradigm is played out in the lives of Dove and her sisters.

In Hanrahan's tales exploring the Old World/New World motif, there are intimations of other possibilities of social order; in particular the

energies of woman and the power of female bonding are seen as challenge and possible alternative to patriarchal structures. Often this potential is imaged in lesbian relationships in such a way as to evoke Monique Wittig's concept of the lesbian as occupying the only socio-sexual position outside the man/woman dyad: 'Lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (man and woman), because the designated subject is not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically.'²³ A number of Hanrahan's women occupy a position of marginality which suggests 'a difference no longer conceived of as an inverted image or as a double, but as alterity, multiplicity, heterogeneity', a position 'posited not within the norms but against and outside the norms'.²⁴

In *The Albatross Muff* there are alternative worlds to that of Percy Villas. Firstly there is Australia itself which exists primarily in the imaginations of Stella and Edith as the antipodean dream land which offers an antidote to the deathly society of Victorian England. Australia is also the place where one like Moak possessing 'the freedom of a broken law' (Hester's situation in *The Scarlet Letter*) can provide an alternative model to that of Stella or Edith's mothers; possessing natural wisdom she is able in Australia to 'walk like a man' and nurture and comfort Stella.²⁵

In striking contrast to the male world of London, is Emma's cottage in Wales, Bryntiron. Like the world of Sarah Orne Jewett's pastoral fiction it is a world without men in which the women live quietly at peace with their surroundings, gathering herbs and tending vegetables; these idyllic sections of the book have a mythic quality in which the women seem to be participating in primordial time.²⁶ In Wales, Edith/Dissy is 'brave as a boy, who didn't flinch when Cousin Emma cut the thorn from her finger, who carried Stella all the way home when she twisted her ankle'. She is handsome — 'a girl who was a boy, with her long stride and tanned face'. In Wales they vow to 'live a lovely life that was nothing to do with needle-work and pinned-up hair and boots that pinched' (pp. 74-5). However their plans are interrupted by Edith's Papa.

While Stella is drawn back into the male world of London, the promise of Australia and Bryntiron lives on in the imagination of Edith. Through her love of Stella, Edith apprehends a different future; rejecting the cultural script that destroyed Stella, she learns to cherish her 'spinster' ambitions; in the antipodean child and in Australia she finds her story, a story that might ensure Stella's daughter a different heritage.²⁷ This vision frees her from the patriarchal structures that destroyed her friend (see pp. 190-3) and by the end of the novel Edith is transformed into the image of the spinster that Nina Auerbach discusses in *Woman and the*

Demon — the free, untrammelled, buoyant voyaging consciousness associated with immigration to the new world and prophetic of new social orders. She is a being threatening to the family and the patriarchal social order, because like the fallen woman (shades of Moak) she exists beyond women's traditional identities as daughter, wife and mother; she is 'a preternaturally endowed creature who taunts conventional morality and seeks the glory of her own apotheosis'.²⁸

The threat of 'woman' and the power of female bonding to the symbolic order is another motif shared by Hanrahan and Hawthorne. Throughout his fiction Hawthorne perceives 'awakened and not conventionally invested female sexual power as a source and type of individualistic nullification of social restraint'.²⁹ 'A female reformer, in her attacks upon society, has an instinctive sense of where the life lies, and is inclined to aim directly at that spot. Especially, the relation between the sexes is naturally among the earliest to attract her notice.'³⁰ Whether the 'witches' in the new world forest or the young girls dancing around the maypole, Hawthorne senses in these communities of women a threatening alternative to patriarchal order, as well as the possibility of a social order more in harmony with nature:

Girls are incomparably wilder and more effervescent than boys, more untameable, and regardless of rule and limit, with an ever shifting variety, breaking continually into new modes of fun, yet with a harmonious propriety through all. Their steps, their voices, appear free as the wind, but keep consonance with a strain of music, inaudible to us. Young men and boys, on the other hand, play according to recognized law, old, traditionary games, permitting no caprioles of fancy, but with scope enough for the outbreak of savage instincts. For, young or old, in play or in earnest, man is prone to be a brute. (p. 68)

While there are problematics in idealizing the power of female bonding in Hanrahan's fiction, it does provide an alternative and challenge to patriarchal order, a way of defeating and escaping the power of the masculine, variously inscribed in the novels as robber bridegroom, greedy monarch, perverted old man or rapist father.

In *Where the Queens All Strayed* the female energies that have been excluded and repressed erupt; the fairy tale princess rejects the fairy tale ending, the prince's hand in marriage. Throughout the novel Thea's beautiful sister Meg has been cast in the role of princess; the aim is to turn her into 'a proper person', 'a feminine girl, cheerful' (p. 146): 'A Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Society was formed to be twin to the Men's. A discussion took place in the Institute Hall on «Were ladies more courteous fifty years ago than at present?» But Meg didn't go ...

Meg concentrated on rites of her own' (p. 135). With her fiancé the butcher who 'chopped up animals in an apron stained with blood' Meg is but 'a walking talking doll. Nodding her head in the right places; smiling into the mirror; only coming to life as she climbed the stairs to Rina's room' (p. 156). Ultimately, this fairy tale princess elopes with her lesbian lover, choosing to die in rebellion against the role socially and politically prescribed for her. Meg's union with Rina — Hanrahan's Mistress Hibbins figure associated with the energies of the forest — is a liberation however desperate from patriarchal myth. Like Miss de Mole, Meg had 'escaped as well, from a robber bridegroom and a sleeping beauty's couch' (p. 171).

They found her by the creek. She lay beside Rina beneath a lemon-tree twined with creeper. Meg and Rina lay together in a leafy room. The world outside was shut away. Under the tree it was cool and shady. The grass there was green; in other places it was bleached by the sun.... She had rustled away. Perhaps God whispered in her heart and revealed that Rina needed her.... They joined hands and ran through the roses and took the path to the creek.... It was a little green room. They had held hands and Meg laughed because it was good.... Rina had green fingers; she knew about plants.... Meg and Rina died ... Meg and Rina were girl friends who ate wild lilies for a joke. (pp. 175-6)

Meg had been something they could never live up to; their efforts to make her over into one of themselves had led to that morning by the creek. (p. 178)

Meg's choice is constructed as heroic within the text. Her sister Thea despising the banal conventionality of her family has dreamed of explorers — 'Explorers weren't ordinary.... They left the banquet at Government House and marched into the wilderness with silken Union Jacks.' However, when she sees Meg dead by the creek with Rina, she realizes that 'Meg was an explorer. She was somewhere with Burke and Wills and all the others who'd braved the interior' (p. 174). Thea is freed by Meg's choice to cherish her 'spinster ambitions' — to go to the new high school in the city like Hilda Nutter, who 'wasn't scared to go anywhere that would be strange. She cared so much for learning she'd never be lonely' (pp. 68-9). And so Rina, lesbian 'witch' associated with the forest, and Hilda Nutter, the learned spinster, became alternative role models for Thea. Both represent ways out of the dominant social order (even as Miss de Mole escapes the stereotype of 'plain English rose' by her heroic invalidism).³¹

In conclusion, in their Gothic novels Hanrahan and Hawthorne convey the sense that the new world is crippled by its acceptance of old world patriarchal structures; both explore forces that have been excluded

from the dominant order, in particular the energies of woman and the power of female bonding; both employ the Gothic mode to explore the Old World/New World paradigm.

I would like to end by invoking Claire Kahane's work on the Gothic. Kahane focuses on the configuration of the dead or displaced mother — rather than the motif of incest within an Oedipal plot — as a virtually ignored but defining characteristic of the Gothic: 'What I see repeatedly locked into the forbidden center of the Gothic ... is the spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all encompassing, a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine [and her society] must confront.'³² The Gothic fear turns out to be 'the fear of femaleness itself, perceived as threatening to one's wholeness, obliterating the very boundaries of the self and of the social order' (p. 347). In *The Albatross Muff* the most powerful image is that of the mother Pensa Hall drinking bowls of blood, her lips rimmed with sinister blackness (p. 136).

She went even further away from pretty Pensa, then, as she licked her lips with pleasure and swallowed that sinister blackness, ringed round the edge with red. It looked blacker, redder in its thick white bowl.... Mama drank blood because her lungs had turned delicate. True: Mama spat other blood that wasn't sinister black, but frothy and brightly scarlet.... Papa had no more use for her; she could only produce babies that died.... What use had papa of girls.... Mama had been a girl too once, who had been Pensa. Now, however, it was 1862, not 1824, when Pensa had sucked a table-spoon on a hearth rug and Papa had first sighted her.... In the end it was Papa who killed her. It was his voice saying the words: «Dead... Dead...» over and over again. (pp. 160-2)

Blood, as Kristeva writes in *Powers of Horror*, is a 'fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality, all come together'.³⁴ Blood, the threat of pollution — which represents for Kristeva the missing discourse of the mother — is a threat to identity and the concept of difference which underlies the dominant social order. As Kristeva writes: 'The power of pollution ... transposes, on the symbolic level, the permanent conflict resulting from an unsettled separation between masculine and feminine power at the level of social institutions. *Non-separation would threaten the whole society with disintegration*' (p. 78; my italics).

These are among the powerful issues evoked in Barbara Hanrahan's Gothic fiction. The exploration of the relation of Old World cultures to New Worlds is, of course, a critical context in which to examine these very issues at the base of the 'civilising' process — a process which has

depended on the polarisation of male and female, and in patriarchal structures, on the annihilation of the female and the institutionalisation of a rigid masculinity.³⁵

NOTES

1. Barbara Hanrahan, *Annie Magdalene* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985). All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
2. *The Albatross Muff* is set in the 1850s, a time of radical democratisation, the Eureka Stockade, the growth of Australian nationalism, the achievement of self-governance by the states, conflicts between the squatters and the big landowners; *The Peach Groves* in the 1880s when Australia was seeking self-government; the six colonies in Australia and one in New Zealand had a parental relationship with England; Henry Parkes, the father figure of Federation, wanted New Zealand to come in with Australia. *Where the Queens All Strayed* is set in 1907 when, with Federation achieved, the country was searching for a site for a national capital; not in any way severed emotionally or psychically from England, it was about to be launched into the traumas of World War I. *The Frangipani Gardens* is set during the Royal Visit of 1927 when the Duke and Duchess of York visited Australia to open the First Parliament in Canberra. *Dove* spans three generations from the 1880s through the great depression; the struggles of the suffragettes, World War I, the great drought in the Mallee in 1914 provide the backdrop for the narrative. *Kewpie Doll* is set in the 1940s and 1950s while *Annie Magdalene* opens with the arrival of Annie's family in Australia in 1908 and traces her life through World War I, the flu epidemic of 1919, the royal visit of 1927, the depression, World War II.
3. See, for instance, Diana Brydon, 'Barbara Hanrahan's Fantastic Fiction', *Westerly*, No 3 (September 1982), pp. 41-9.
4. Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The Gray Champion' in *Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches* edited by Hyatt Waggoner (New York: Rinehart, 1970), p. 144.
5. Barbara Hanrahan, cited by John Stevens, 'An Author Who Finds Little Joy in Her Task of Writing', *The Age*, 15 June 1985.
6. Barbara Hanrahan, op. cit.
7. Barbara Hanrahan, *Kewpie Doll* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984), p. 145. In *Kewpie Doll*, the narrator refers to Hawthorne in relation to her mother's history/past: 'My mother's story was over, the old legends were fixed ... the time when she drew the pansy at school; *The Scarlet Letter*. ... All my mother's past was in her voice and telling, she made it mine.... A past she didn't tell to anyone but me' (p. 128).
8. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 425. All further references are included in the text.
9. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 131.
10. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 97. All further references are included in the text.
11. In the context of the relationship between old worlds and new, Sneja Gunew writes of the migrant as a child: 'This child is required to renegotiate an entry into the

- symbolic — needs to go once more through a form of the mirror stage, in which a putative subject is reflected by the gaze of the new host culture, and is quite other to any previous unified subject.' ('Distinguishing the Textual Politics of the Marginal Voice', *Southern Review*, Vol. 18, No 2 (July 1985), p. 145.
12. Barbara Hanrahan, *The Albatross Muff* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986), pp. 135, 175. All further references are included in the text.
 13. Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The New Adam and Eve', in *The Complete Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 327.
 14. See for instance Clark Griffiths, 'Pearl's Green A: «The Scarlet Letter» and American History', *The Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. II, No 1 (July 1983), pp. 21-34.
 15. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Signet, 1959), p. 79.
 16. Linda Schierse Leonard, *The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship* (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1982), pp. 87-9.
 17. Barbara Hanrahan, *The Frangipani Gardens* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1980), pp. 161-2. All further references are included in the text.
 18. Barbara Hanrahan, *The Peach Groves* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1979), p. 65. All further references are included in the text.
 19. While *Dove* marks a transition from Hanrahan's Gothic period, there are traces of the pattern; Dove is the child of a convict and an Australian girl and Valentine Arden, the offspring of the illegitimate union of a compliant girl from the valley and Prince Albert Victor.
 20. Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 162.
 21. Barbara Hanrahan, *Where the Queens All Strayed* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978), p. 83. All further references are included in the text.
 22. Barbara Hanrahan, *Dove* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), pp. 15-16. All further references are included in the text.
 23. Monique Wittig quoted in Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Inscribing Femininity: French Theories of the Feminine', in *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 90-91.
 24. Josette Feral, 'The Powers of Difference', in *The Future of Difference* edited by Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1980), p. 91.
 25. In Hawthorne's novel Hester's situation is described as follows: 'For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free.' (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Signet, 1959), p. 190). Similarly in *Dove* Issy Thorn in the Mallee had 'got free': 'Now she was shameless: she dressed like a man. She wore the same dungarees and faded work-shirt as her father; she was as sunburned as a savage — her cheeks were brick red. But she looked tall and healthy and energetic.' (p. 75)
 26. See pp. 72-75, 187-193, for the Welsh interlude.
 27. Australia has the same impact on Edith's imagination as it does on Miss Peabody's in Elizabeth Jolley's novel; Miss Peabody's inheritance is also the imagination awakened by Australia, an exotic land where gender conventions might be overturned. (See my essay 'The Nights Belong to Elizabeth Jolley: Modernism and the Sappho-Erotic Imagination of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance*', *Meanjin*, Vol. 43, No 4 (December 1984), pp. 484-93.)

28. Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 109-49, 153, 185.
29. Michael Colacurcio, 'Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson: The Context of *The Scarlet Letter*, *ELH*, Vol. 39 (1972), p. 474.
30. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, A Norton Critical Edition, edited by Seymour Gross and Rosalie Murphy (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 41. All further references are included in the text.
31. The figures of Tempe in *The Peach Groves* and Girlie in *The Frangipani Gardens* are more ambiguous. Tempe is a Pearl figure associated with the energies of the forest; her liaison with the antipodean child Maud and her attempt to sacrifice Maude to Eddie/Tane is an attempt to sacrifice the European to the forest god and to gain revenge for the corruption of her mother and the destruction of their homeland by the European. Girlie's 'evil' ('I am perfectly evil, perfectly strong') is 'an antidote to her miniature size', which is in turn an emblem of her powerlessness. Like so many of the girl children in Hanrahan's fiction she has been stunted by a sinister old man: 'It was the one she loved who stunted her most. Girlie had been maimed early on. The reward of Papa's tyrant arms about her had set her off playing little girl for life ... while a docile Girlie sat on Papa's knee ... a stranger Girlie jeered inside her head and spat out the silent maledictions that cut at the sentimental fug.' (p. 17)
32. Claire Kahane, 'The Gothic Mirror', in *The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 334-6. All further references are included in the text.
33. Stella's belated awakening from Victorian legend takes place during her own pregnancy when she explores the house/body that has become her domain, encountering in a trunk in the attic the forgotten letters of Pensa, the spectral mother ('If it happened to Pensa, why not me?'). See pp. 185-7.
34. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 96, 78.
35. As Teresa de Lauretis suggests: 'woman, the other-from-man (nature and Mother, site of sexuality and masculine desire, sign and object of men's social exchange) is the term that designates at once the vanishing point of our culture's fictions of itself and the condition of the discourses in which the fictions are represented' (*Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 5). See also Sherry Ortner's influential essay, 'Is Female to Male as Nature to Culture?', in *Woman, Culture & Society*, edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 67-89.